(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) what actions were taken by RBI to arrest the continuing slide and with what results?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) The nominal exchange rate of the rupee depreciated from the monthly average of Rs. 37.24 per US dollar in November, 1997 to Rs. 42.24 per US dollar on June 17, 1998, as shown below:

Month/Date	*Rs. /US$*
November, 1997 (Average)	37.24
December, 1997 (Average)	39.22
January, 1998 (Average)	39.38
February, 1998 (Average)	38.89
March, 1998 (Average)	39.50
April, 1998 (Average)	39.66
May, 1998 (Average)	40.47
June, 1998 (Average)	42.24

The exchange rate of the rupee in India is market determined. The movements in the nominal exchange rate of the rupee vis-a vis the US dollar over the year reflect the developments in the foreign exchange market conditions in India, which in turn are influenced by the underlying trends in the inflow and outflow of foreign exchange arising from India's international transactions on the current and capital accounts of balance of payments as well as by the short-term speculative factors. Movements of the rupee against the dollar also reflect to some extent the movement of the dollar against other currencies in the international markets.

(c) The exchange rate developments are closely monitored both by the Government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The RBI, as and when necessary, intervenes in the foreign exchange markets and deploys suitable monetary policy and other special measures to effectively counter speculative pressures on the rupee and to ensure orderly foreign exchange market conditions. The long term measures undertaken by the authorities include fostering macro-economic stability, pursuit of rapid growth of output and productivity, regular monitoring of the developments in the balance of payments and institution of appropriate policy measures so as to keep the level of the current account deficit within sustainable levels and to manage capital flows consistent with the country's requirement of external financing and build-up of foreign exchange reserves. These measures have helped to maintain reasonable stability in the external value of the rupee during periods of speculative pressures and to maintain the level of exchange rate consistent with the preservation and improvement of India's external competitiveness.

Smuggling of Computers

*600. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY:
DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether computers are being smuggled on a large scale in the country;

(b) if so, whether any racket of computer smuggling has been unearthed;

(c) if so, the details thereof, brand and number of computers seized by Government agencies during 1996-97 and till date; and

(d) the action taken by Government against such smugglers and to check the smuggling?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI R. JANARTHANAM): (a) and (b) The available reports or intelligence do not indicate smuggling of computers in the country on a large scale. Some isolated cases of attempted clearances of computers

without payment of duty by non-declaration, concealment in baggage and misuse of green channel facility by the incoming passengers have been detected at international airports. A case of suspected smuggling of 17 small palmtop computers from Nepal, has also recently come to the notice. As per reports available, no racket involving computers smuggling have come to notice.

(c) The details of number of computers seized with available particulars and value of seized computers, during the financial years 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 (till date) are as under:

Year	No. of computers seized	Value of Computers seized (Rs.)	Place of Seizure	Brands of computers seized
1996-97	3	1,72,222	International Airport at Calcutta	Toshiba Laptop — 2 Lancer Digital Microprocessor — 1
1997-98	7	5,60,000	International Airports at Chennai, Delhi and Calcutta	Compaq Laptop — 5 Portable Personal Computer — 1 BM Thinkpad — 1 laptop
	17	98,400	New Delhi Railway Station (Train coming from Patna)	Psion Series 3C — 8 Palmtop Psion Series 3A Palmtop — 9
	24	6,58,400		
1998-99 (till date)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

(d) Wherever any attempted clearance of computers by incoming passengers without declaration and proper payment of duty was detected, appropriate penal action against such persons/offending goods, as provided in the Customs Act, 1962 was taken. Offending goods under the Customs law can either be confiscated or allowed to be redeemed on payment of Redemption fine, apart from the duty leviable. Penalty can also be imposed depending upon the nature of offence. In the atoresaid cases, action has been taken, accordingly.

Deployment of a number of X-ray baggage screening machines at all international airports, helps in detection of any attempt of concealment of computers in accompanied/unaccompanied baggage. All preventive formations/agencies including Customs staff working at airports are on alert to check any attempted smuggling including those of computers. Customs duty rates, over the years, on

computers and various parts and accessories thereof, have also been brought down substantially and this has helped in containing smuggling.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Proposed Air University in Hyderabad

4437. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state;

(a) whether any proposal to convert Hyderabad based Central Training Establishment (CTE) into an Air University with technical assistance from the International Civil Aviation Organisation is under consideration of Government; and

(b) if so, the details of the proposed University and what benefits are likely to be derived therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Filling up of SC/ST vacancies in AI

4438. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of vacancies of pilots earmarked for SC/ST candidates and others standing unfilled with Air India as at present;

(b) the number of accumulated backlog vacancies for SC/ST candidates lying unfilled for over two years and the attempts made to fill up the same, indicating the advertisements issued and follow up action; and

(c) how many of them have been filled with non SC/ST candidates?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) At present there is a backlog of 35 SC/ST Co-Pilots and Trainee Pilots in Air India. Special recruitment exclusively for SC/ST and OBC candidates was undertaken for which advertisements were released in September, 1994 and November, 1996 leading to selection of 8 SC, 1 ST and 8 OBC Trainee Pilots. A campus recruitment was also held at Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademy in April, 1996 leading to appointment of 2 SC and 1 OBC Trainee Pilots.

(c) None of the vacancies of pilots earmarked for SC/ST have been filled with non SC/ST candidates.

सेन्दूर होटल को बन्द करना

4439. **श्री अखिलेश दास:** क्या नागर विमानन मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार ने एयर इंडिया द्वारा संचालित सेन्दूर होटल को तत्काल बन्द करने के संबंध में प्रबंधकों द्वारा दिए गए प्रस्ताव का अनुमोदन कर दिया है;

(ख) क्या प्रबंधकों ने दिल्ली, मुम्बई और चेन्नई में सेन्दूर होटलों के कार्यालयों को बन्द करने का निर्णय लिया है;

(ग) विदेशी पर्यटकों को निवास और अन्य सुविधाएं देने के लिए एयर इंडिया ने किए प्रकार की वैकल्पिक व्यवस्था की है; और

(घ) उपर्युक्त निर्णय के लिए कौन-कौन से कारक उत्तरदायी हैं?

नागर विमानन मंत्री (श्री अनंत कुमार): (क) और (ख) भारतीय होटल निगमन जो सेंटॉर होटल समूह का संचालन करता है, के प्रबंधक-वर्ग द्वारा कोई ऐसा प्रस्ताव प्रस्तुत नहीं किया गया है।

(ग) और (घ) ये प्रश्न नहीं उठते।

Leasing of 4 Jet Aircrafts from Foreign Airlines

4440. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRAN REDDY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the new policy is against 4 Jet Aircrafts leased from foreign airlines; and

(b) if so, the impact of termination of lease agreements of such Jet Airways operations?